

Workplace Traffic Safety

This is Road-Safe Workplace, an electronic newsletter about workplace traffic safety from the Vermont Department of Labor because the number one cause of death and injury in the workplace are traffic crashes. Road-Safe Workplace has been created to distribute statistics, facts, and other materials to help employers create, maintain and improve their workplace traffic safety programs. Please use this information in your company newsletters, bulletin boards, or employee e-mail memos. Your thoughts and comments are always welcome. However, if you do not wish to receive Road-Safe Workplace, please reply with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.



Your Attention Please

It really comes as no surprise, yet a study was needed to re-enforce the common held belief that "inattention" is the leading cause of traffic crashes. "Inattention" is caused by diversions that attract our attention. Diversions can happen both inside and outside your motor vehicle. These take the form of technology like cell phones or GPS capabilities. Diversions can also be changing CDs or tuning the radio or even talking with passengers. Sometimes "inattention" can be attributed to old fashioned day-dreaming. Official crash reports have a variety of crash-causes that can be checked off, but some observers believe that for the most part, these causes are rooted in "inattention." The following report, issued on April 20, is about the relationship of "inattention" to traffic crashes from NHTSA, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

NHTSA, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute Release Findings of Breakthrough Research on Real-World Driver Behavior, Distraction and Crash Factors

Driver inattention is the leading factor in most crashes and near-crashes, according to a landmark research report released today by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI).

Nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involved some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event. Primary causes of driver inattention are distracting activities, such as cell phone use, and drowsiness.

"This important research illustrates the potentially dire consequences that can occur while driving distracted or drowsy. It's crucial that drivers always be alert when on the road," said Jacqueline Glassman, acting administrator of NHTSA. Her remarks were made during a news conference today at VTTI in Blacksburg, VA.

The 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study tracked the behavior of the drivers of 100 vehicles equipped with video and sensor devices for more than one year. During that time, the vehicles were driven nearly 2,000,000 miles, yielding 42,300 hours of data. The 241 drivers of the vehicles were involved in 82 crashes, 761 near crashes, and 8,295 critical incidents.

"The huge database developed through this breakthrough study is enormously valuable in helping us to understand—and prevent—motor vehicle crashes," said Dr. Tom Dingus, director of VTTI. In addition, a follow-on analysis to the 100-Car Study has also been released. Focused on the types of driver inattention and their associated risk, key findings include:

- Drowsiness is a significant problem that increases a driver's risk of a crash or near-crash by at least a factor of four. But drowsy driving may be significantly under-reported in police crash investigations.
- The most common distraction for drivers is the use of cell phones. However, the number of crashes and near-crashes attributable to dialing is nearly identical to the number associated with talking or listening. Dialing is more dangerous but occurs less often than talking or listening.
- Reaching for a moving object increased the risk of a crash or near-crash by 9 times; looking at an external object by 3.7 times; reading by 3 times; applying makeup by 3 times; dialing a hand-held device (typically a cell phone) by almost 3 times; and talking or listening on a hand-held device by 1.3 times.
- Drivers who engage frequently in distracting activities are more likely to be involved in an inattention-related crash or near-crash. However, drivers are often unable to predict when it is safe to look away from the road to multi-task because the situation can change abruptly leaving the driver no time to react even when looking away from the forward roadway for only a brief time. The 100-Car Study and its follow-on analysis were co-sponsored by NHTSA, the Virginia Transportation Research Council (the research division of the Virginia Department of Transportation) and Virginia Tech.

The background and results of both studies are available on NHTSA's website under Research and Development at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-13/newDriverDistraction.html>

Sharing the Road Safely is a Full-Time Job

June is National Safety Month, and Project Road-Safe takes a look at various areas of traffic safety that emphasize the importance of being courteous to other motorists and pedestrians on Vermont's roadways. Sharing the road safely is very important to every Vermont employer.

One obvious and very visible type of driver routinely observed using Vermont's roadways at any time of day is the commercial truck driver, whose vehicle plays a very critical role in our nation's transportation system and economy as well. The numbers of trucks, large and small, on the road have increased for the past several years, and their frequent presence on our highways underscores the need to safely share the road with them.

Motorists and truck drivers must share the roadways daily, but do we really know how to do that safely?

The following Motorist's Quiz was developed by AAA Public Affairs to help focus much needed attention to this essential element of traffic safety:

If you can see a truck's side mirrors, the truck driver can see you. True or False

True. If you can see a truck's mirrors, the driver *should* be able to see you. But whether or not he or she *does* see you is another question. As a motorist, you should maneuver your vehicle into a position where a truck driver can clearly see it. Remember, the driver might not see your vehicle in certain locations, known as *no zones* or blindspots.

When passing a large truck, allow yourself: a. 15 seconds b. 30 seconds c. Plenty of time

The answer is c. Allow yourself plenty of time when passing a truck. It can take up to 30 seconds to safely pass a truck at highway speeds. When you pass, do so quickly. Don't

continuously drive alongside a truck -- you're in the driver's *no zone*, or blind spot. After passing, change lanes only when you can see the truck's headlights or front grill in your rearview mirror.

To maintain a safe following distance, Vermont law stipulates that motorists must follow trucks (and other vehicles) at a distance of: a. 4 seconds b. 4 car lengths c. 2 seconds

The answer is a. Vermont law stipulates that a vehicle must be at least four seconds behind a vehicle in front. When following a truck the four seconds keep you out of the truck's rear blind spot, or *no zone*. Use the following method to compute the correct distance: as a truck passes a stationary object alongside the road, start counting one thousand one, one thousand two, etc. You should reach one thousand four as your front bumper reaches the same object. If you arrive before you one thousand four, you are traveling too close to the back of the truck.

At an intersection, a truck immediately in front of you is signaling to make a right turn. Your smartest move is to: a. Go around on left. b. Stay put. c. Go around on right.

The answer is b. Trucks make wide right turns. It may look like trucks are going straight or turning left when they are actually making a right turn. This technique --- combined with blind spots alongside the trailer --- makes trying to pass a turning truck a dangerous maneuver. Truck drivers can't see cars squeezing in between them and the curb. Stay put, and give truck drivers plenty of room to turn.

Truck drivers are professionally trained, and it is their job to drive safely. Motorists need to take special care when driving around trucks, and learn to share the road safely.

Employer Guidebook to Reduce Traffic Crashes

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) have joined forces to create the 32-page ***Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes***, featuring a 10-step program outlining what an employer can do to improve traffic safety performance and minimize the risk of motor vehicle crashes. The document includes success stories from employers who have benefited from effective driver safety programs, including Pike Industries with operations in Vermont.

The booklet is available to employers from: njames@labor.state.vt.us. Ask for the ***Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes***. The booklet will be sent in the mail, so be sure to include your mailing address.

Inattention, speed, driving while impaired, disregard for stop signs and traffic lights, and failure to yield the right of way are the major causes of crashes on our highways.



**REMEMBER -- BUCKLE YOUR SEATBELT
EVERY TIME!**